

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 5           1.       A device for coupling at least two medically applicable instruments, said at least two medically applicable instruments being coupled to at least two control apparatuses, said device comprising:  
              a central control unit coupled to input and/or output connections of said at least two control apparatuses, said central control unit including:  
10               at least one processor which (i) receives output signals from the at least two control apparatuses and (ii) converts the output signals into a unified format; and  
              at least one processor which (i) receives inputted control signals, (ii) converts the control signals into formats corresponding  
15               to the respective at least two control apparatuses, and (iii) transfers the converted control signals to the at least two control apparatuses to control the at least two medically applicable instruments.
2.       The device as set forth in claim 1, wherein the central control unit  
20               includes at least one processor, using which different display information and/or image formats can be converted into a predetermined, defined image format.
3.       The device as set forth in claim 1, wherein the at least two control apparatuses coupled to the at least two medical apparatus are provided in a rack.  
25               4.       A system comprising a device as set forth in claim 1 and a display device coupled to the central control unit.
5.       The system as set forth in claim 4, comprising a central input device  
30               coupled to the central control unit.

6. The system as set forth in claim 5, wherein the central input device includes at least one of a touch screen, a keyboard, a cursor control unit, a mouse, a joystick, a trackball, a foot switch, a touch pad and a speech input device.

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7. The system as set forth in claim 5, wherein at least one of the data output device and the data input device is coupled to the central control unit via a bus.

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8. The system as set forth in claim 7, wherein the bus provides an electrical separation between the data input device or the data output device and the central control unit.

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9. The system as set forth in claim 5, further comprising a storage unit for storing data captured by the medical instruments and/or data inputted via the data input device.

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10. The system as set forth in any one of the preceding six claims, wherein at least one component or device forming the system is mounted to a ceiling of an associated operating room.

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11. A method for operating at least two medical instruments, said medical instruments being coupled to and exchanging data and/or information with at least one control apparatus, said method comprising:  
coupling the at least one control apparatus to a central control unit;  
receiving output signal data obtained from the medical instruments, said output signal data being transferred via the at least one control apparatus; and  
converting the received output signal data into a unified format.

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12. The method as set forth in claim 11, further comprising:  
receives inputted control signals via the central control unit;

converting the control signals into formats corresponding to the respective  
at least two medical instruments; and

transferring the converted control signals to the at least two medical  
instruments via the at least one control apparatus, thereby controlling the at least  
5 two medically applicable instruments.

13. The method as set forth in claim 11, further comprising transmitting  
the converted data to a central display device coupled to the central control unit.

10 14. The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein the central display  
device displays data from a medical instrument in one or more windows and/or  
display data from different medical instruments in combination.

15 15. The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein the central display  
device displays menus for operating the at least two medical instruments.

16. The method as set forth in claim 13, wherein central display device  
includes an alarm display.

20 17. A computer program which, run on a computer or loaded on a  
computer, carries out the steps set forth in claim 12.

18. A program storage medium or computer program product  
comprising the computer program as set forth in claim 17.

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